

Francis Preston Blair to Andrew Jackson, April 4, 1841, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

class=MsoNormal>FRANCIS P. BLAIR TO JACKSON.

Washington, April 4, 1841.

My Dear General, At 12 oclock last night President Harrison died. For several days there was little hope of his recovery. I have no doubt that his fate was hastened by his excited feelings. His temperament could not stand the weighty honors and the weighty functions, devolved upon him. From the moment that his election became probable he began to run about like Meg Merrilies, Walter Scott's celebrated gypsy. Since he has been on this side of the mountains he has constantly kept moving and in the most restless state of excitement. He had hardly got through 0122 98 his fetes and parades here before he set off for Virginia and took another round; and since he has returned he has been so pulled about by the Spoils hunters and so torn to peices in mind, by his contrary promises and contrary wishes, that he has been in a state, little short of distraction.

Gen. Hunter, the Marshal, gave me a description of a scene which will give you some idea of his condition. A few days after the Inauguration, Genl. Hunter called, and found the House full of people. The President wanted to have a meeting of his cabinet but could not go into a room where he was not pressed by the crowd. Hunter expostulated but in vain. He prepared to rally a force to drive out the intruders, but suggested to the president first to make a speech to them, stating his condition. This he did, told them it was impossible to attend to their claims upon him then as public business imperiously required his time. The Spoils men, however, refused to quit unless he would then , receive their papers and pledge himself to attend to them. He capitulated, and first all his pockets were filled with

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papers, then his hat, then his arms, and finally Hunter was loaded; and both marched up stairs with as much as they could carry. It was with difficulty then that the House was cleared. This press has continued after him ever since in a more serious way—constantly arbitrating claims urged by different members of the Cabinet and exalted men of the party, for disputants for office.

Notwithstanding this accumulating harassment within doors, the man's restlessness has kept him ever running about. He has been going through the Departments to make the show of a Reformer—running round afoot, after night, paying visits and among the rest to all the Ex-cabinet men and up by day light trudging on foot to market! The Saturday, just a week before he died, he made his last perambulation among the beef stalls and the fish market.

Every day, too, he was at the Gardiner to have plenty of vegetables, said he was a great lover of the good things of the garden, had all the pretty trees cut down that adorned it, that the sun might have fair play in providing for him. The old man eat enormously and took a great deal of stimulus, to keep him from sinking under the occasional collapses from the high key of his mental irritation, His pampered vanity added to the tension of the other passions which strained all his faculties beyond their capabilities and at last every thing gave way at once. Colo. Benton called to see him, the day he first took his bed, to introduce a gentleman. He came out to see them. His face was greatly flushed and he said he was taking hot teas to allay the feverish symptoms. poor man! he was in the final struggle of his System. When it relaxed he sank into a typhus, which closed in death.

It is a great problem what will be the course of Tyler. His proposed principles are all opposed to the task which will be set for him by those to whom he owes his place. Will he be the pliant tool of Clay? Upon that hangs matters of great magnitude to the country and I fear that Tyler is such a poor weeping willow of a creature, that he will resign all to the audacious depravity of the political black-leg. Providence I hope will guide all for the best. Meantime, as far as a faithful exhibition of the great principles of which you gave

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an example to the country can do good with a constant contrast with their opposites, the Globe shall not be wanting to the office you committed to it.

I have heard that the Feds. mean to defeat the election of Democratic Senators in Tennessee by the trick of getting their members to secede and refuse to make a quorum to order the election—it requiring two-thirds to make a quorum. Would it not be well to provide by the same law for the election of the senators and the members of the House? Could it not be provided in the same Bill that provides for the election of Rep’s to congress that the election of Senators should take place on a certain day and that a majority should elect? If so, this would compel the Whigs to form a quorum to pass the measures preliminary to the election of Senators, as they could not elect members of the House without passing the Bill containing the provision for Senators. Every precaution should be taken to guard against the frauds of the enemy at this Juncture, particularly in regard to the Senate, for there is the point where the contest is to be closest.

I heard from my Daughter as late as the 20th ult. She writes that her health is “ quite good ” that “ the cough has left her entirely. ” This is good news and makes more than amends to me for all the private vexations which such villians as Clay and his myrmidons can inflict. They have thrown a great stress upon the Globe, however, by stripping it of all work after full preparation. I shall be able notwithstanding to maintain the establishment for the 4 years war, provided my friends will subscribe very generally for the dollar publications. This I think every Democrat would willingly do, to prevent the only daily and weekly Journal which watches and reports events from Washington going down. I shall send you some of my prospectus hoping that you can Send a few out among active friends in Tennessee, with an exhortation to promote the subscription.

My wife sends love to you, Mr. Jackson and all the little ones. Let me add mine, and beg you to pardon, D’s; General, this long intrusion of bad penmanship. Yo. mo. af.
Friend